The Mediating Role of the Meaning of Work in the Relationship between Organizational Constraints and Psychological Well-Being at Work

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Abstract

This study examines the mediating role of the meaning of work in the relationship between organizational constraints and well-being at work. A selection of two inductors of the work situation was done in the framework of this study because of their explanatory power related to well - being at worknamely: workload and hierarchical support. Our hypothesis postulates that the meaning of work combines with the characteristics of the work situation to determine well-being at work (BET). In other words, we believe that the meaning of work mediates the effects of organizational inductors on well-being at work. In this perspective, 581 teachers from primary and secondary schools all sectors included (public, private, denominational, etc.) of the city of Yaounde (Cameroon) and aged between 21 and 60 years ($M = 35.3$, $\sigma = 7.9$) were interviewed using a self-report questionnaire. Multiple regression analyses following the procedure of Baron and Kenny (1986) confirm the mediating role of the meaning of work in the relationship between workload, hierarchical support and well-being at work.

Keywords: psychological well-being at work, meaning of work, workload, hierarchical support

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem

Problems related to psychological health at work are increasing dramatically (Gilbert, 2009; Bouterfas, 2014). This is certainly because the repression of the reality of work is increasing (Clot, 2006) and with it, the collapse of the meaning that it carries with, are taking on worrying proportions. While work remains vital for health because workers ask it to lighten the rest of their lives, work hardly offers any more opportunities for omnipotence, for broadening the foundations of the personality, for being at the origin of things and for creating the original links between them.

In an entropic social context, now deprived of the possibilities of transformation, marked by a sluggish activity, deprived of resources and creative initiatives, traversed by a managerial crisis that seems to have abandoned to the workers the care of thinking about their work and the responsibility of organizing their cooperation, Cameroonian teachers find themselves idle, deprived of psychodynamic and symbolic or even transpersonal recognition (Nyock Ilouga, 2019). In Cameroon, the effective attendance rate of teachers in overcrowded and dilapidated classrooms varies between 20 and 40%. The coverage rate of the teaching programs hardly exceeds 25% (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). While the social status of teachers has deteriorated in all countries, the situation in Cameroon seems hopeless. Since the beginning of the 1990s, marked in particular by a spectacular reduction in the salaries paid to Cameroonian civil servants, the conditions for exercising the teaching profession have gradually sunk to critical levels, forcing teachers to scramble for survival. Mingat and Suchaut (2000) have noted that the social recognition of the teacher and his or her membership of an elite no longer exist in Cameroon. The Cameroonian teacher is despised by his pupils and their parents, some of whom do not hesitate to be generous towards poor teachers in exchange for a particular follow-up of their child. The administrative hierarchy and society in general attribute to teachers the responsibility for the general decline in the level of competence and the development of incivility. If we add to this the hardship of the task itself: the density of lessons, the continuous attention and personal involvement required, the permanent and diverse demands to

which the teacher must respond without resources, it is easy to recognize that the life of the Cameroonian craftsman of knowledge is hardly defensible in his work environment, since his activity and his health are antinomic (Artaud, 1984). However, even under these conditions, teaching does not make sense because it is always and above all a question of bearing the weight of the responsibility of representing a community and, in so doing, showing the way towards the higher forms of the common world. What role does the meaning of work play in helping Cameroonian teachers to bear an important workload, without resources, and staying healthy?

1.2 Psychological Well-Being

Conceptions of psychological well-being have been based essentially on two approaches: a hedonic approach and eudemonic approach to well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hedonism is a Greek philosophical doctrine stipulating that the quest for pleasure and the avoidance of displeasure is the goal of human existence. In psychology, hedonic well-being is conceptualized and measured as subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1999); it represents the result of interactions between the stimuli linked to the existence of the individual and the different situations he encounters. Subjective well-being is made up of three components: positive effects, a low level of negative effects, and satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999).

According to the eudemonist current, well-being consists of a psychological functioning in accordance with one's own nature, linked to the fact of living in harmony with oneself and one's values (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). From this perspective, well-being goes through self-realization, from the moment when the individual seizes the opportunities to develop and considers life according to the challenges that arise, while feeling capable of facing them (Waterman, 1993). Thus, psychological well-being relates to the subject's positive relations with his entourage, autonomy, control of his environment, self-acceptance, personal development, the need for competence, the need for social affiliation and the need for autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff 2014). The primary goal is to live in accordance with oneself and one's values (Waterman, 1993).

1.3 Well-Being at Work

Presented as a dimension of the psychological contract that results from the perception of situations and constraints relating to the professional sphere (Grosjean & Guyot, 2016), well-being at work is to be distinguished from psychological well-being which is rooted in ontological and existential reflections.

On the other hand, the conceptual framework of well-being at work is based on an abundant Anglo-Saxon literature inspired by positive psychology which insists on the need to take into account the overall feeling of fulfilment and fullness (Steger et al., 2008; Park, 2010). In fact, well-being at work emerges through the relationship that the worker builds with his work situation. It acquires greater validity when the items that measure it are related to the professional field (Gilbert et al., 2011). However, the meaning of work situations has an impact on life in general and any dissonance between well-being at work and overall psychological well-being generates distress and mobilizes cognitive efforts aimed at reducing this gap. This point of view is defended by Danna and Griffin (1999) who integrate in their conceptual model of well-being at work, the dimensions of physical and mental health, work-related satisfactions such as payroll and job promotion opportunities, the various extra-professional satisfactions such as leisure, the level of social and family life. They establish interrelationships between job satisfaction and joblessness satisfaction.

Cotton and Hart's heuristic model of organizational health (2003) partially supports this view and describes well-being at work as the association of distress, fulfilment, and job satisfaction. In another register, the model of Daniels (2000) operationalizes well-being at work through a continuum comprising five refuges: anxiety-comfort, depression-pleasure, boredom-enthusiasm, fatigue-vigor, and anger-placidity. In the same vein, the multidimensional approach to well-being at work is also at the center of the concerns of Dagenais-Desmarais (2010) who proposes a two-axis model. The first axis reflects the sphere of reference which corresponds to the positive experience the individual has at work. This sphere of reference contains three levels: the positive state of a worker in relation to himself, the positive state of a worker in relation to the social interactions that he forges in his work, and finally the positive state resulting from the interaction between the worker and the organization that employs him (Dagenais-Desmarais, 2010). The second axis materializes the mechanism through which the worker develops his positive experience. These approaches target the relationships that workers build with their work situations, taking into account the significant experiences of their socio-professional experiences. In fact, well-being at work is affected not by work constraints, which would by definition have an impact of the same importance for everyone, but by the necessarily subjective meaning that certain work situations have for the employee.

1.4 What does Psychological Well-Being at Work Depend on

Scientific literature on well-being at work emphasizes on the determining role of the interaction between the subjective experience of workers and work constraints in the construction of well-being at work (Grosjean & Guyot, 2016). In this perspective, a large number of organizational, psychosocial and personal factors that may have a more or less significant impact on the physical and psychological health of workers can be identified. In the present research, we will examine the impact of perceived workload, hierarchical support, and meaning of work.

1.4.1 The Workload

Currently, work overload is a factor of work requirements or a psychosocial risk at work which can generate stress and, in the long run, deteriorate well-being at work (Truchot, 2004). According to Ntsame-Sima (2012), workload is conceived in two dimensions which are the quantitative load and the qualitative load. Quantitative load refers to a high amount of work and lack of time to complete it. As for the qualitative load, it refers to the worker who has the feeling of not having the necessary skills for the tasks entrusted to him. In recent years, teachers have been emphasizing on the increase of their task (Riel, 2008). The growing heterogeneity of students, the increase in school attendance and the implementation of pedagogic reforms have likely contributed to this perception. In addition, teaching profession is becoming more and more demanding in terms of time to be invested in accomplishing many and varied tasks previously reserved for support staff such as psychologists, guidance counsellors and specialized educators, which number has reduced significantly due to budget restrictions (St-Arnaud et al., 2000). This increase in work is not without consequence, as it leads to an increase in psychological demands. These demands refer to the psychological load associated with unforeseen tasks, the psychological conflicts resulting from contradictory injunctions and prescriptions in all directions disconnected from the reality of the actual performance of the work. These random demands, in high quantity, can place the individual in a state of stress when they exceed or threaten to destroy the resources available to do the job well. Well-being at work is particularly threatened in an environment where individuals try to fill the gaps in the work environment by introducing their own resources.

Research results show a link between the psychological demands of work and the psychological distress of teachers (Chartrand, 2006). It should be added that the large number of hours worked (Finlay-Jones, 1986; Griva & Joekes, 2003) and the irregularity of working hours (Chartrand, 2006) are important determinants of the well-being of teachers at work. Hypothesis (H_1): Overall, we expect a low level of well-being at work among Cameroonian teachers, given the dysfunctions of the context. However, we believe that the level of well-being at work would depend on the workload received by each worker.

1.4.2 Hierarchical Support

Hierarchical or organizational support reflects the feeling of being supported by the organization through the hierarchical superior.
Supervisor support is one form of Hierarchical support alongside that which can be provided by colleagues, family, friends or others outside the company (Roger & Othmane, 2013).

As part of the types of support, with reference to work-related resources, colleagues and supervisors make suggestions that can help reduce demands at work, or in many cases, can even directly reduce demands at work (Ntsame-Sima, 2012). Hierarchical support has two dimensions that can be complementary: on the one hand an emotional dimension, characterized by listening and sympathy, the interest shown in the person and the signs of recognition that can be shown to him, and on the other hand, an instrumental dimension in the form of tangible assistance, help or advice to accomplish a professional mission. In his definition of types of support through a study related to teachers, Hobfoll (1988) likens emotional support to the manifestation of confidence, empathy, love or benevolence which would make it possible to consolidate the teacher and strengthen his emotional regulation capacities. As for the instrumental support, it corresponds to technical assistance, a reflection on the difficulties arising in the professional context, relevant information, advice in the form of feedback on the work provided or the situation described.

In this perspective, the support of the hierarchical supervisor therefore takes several forms: the hierarchical manager can, for example, transmit information to his collaborator, remove obstacles that hinder the normal performance of work, congratulate him, give him regular feedback on his performance and advice to improve it, entrust him with missions that promote his development or help him in his career orientation (Greenhaus et al., 1990). Karasek & Theorell (1990) suggest that, in difficult work situations, hierarchical support can have a "cushioning" effect on stress and an accelerator of well-being at work (Rodriguez et al., 2001). Hypothesis (H_2): we think that the level of well-being at work would depend on the hierarchical support received by the worker.

1.4.3 The Meaning of Work

According to Sartre (1996), work cannot be part of activities that might bring meaning to one's life. To him, those activities are fair, good, self-satisfying, and do not need any other source of motivation. Yet, Comte-Sponville (2017), asserts that work is not a moral value. It can therefore not be self-satisfactory, since it is primarily a means to serve extra professional roles. That is the reason why, according to him, work has a meaning. But, meaning being a basically extrinsic notion, the meaning of work goes deep inside roles achieved by an individual in other fields of life (Nyock Ilouga & Moussa Mouloungui, 2019). The paradox is a testimony of how complex the concept of meaning is, and justifies the abundance and diversity of approaches dedicated to it (Bernaud, 2016). Among outstanding contributions to understand the meaning of work, it is worth noting with Kant (1993, first edition in 1975) and Sartre (1996) the idea that meaning is a result of a continuous construction or a search for meaning in a world that is deprived of it. In an entropy context characterized by a seamless job market, long-term unemployment, and informal activity development (Nyock Ilouga et al., 2018), the above mentioned conquest is brought to a new light. Jung's idea which states that a human being completes the work of creation and "determines its level of perfection" revives the promethean approach of work and makes it a creative activity (Meda & Vandramin, 2013). Work therefore carries essential meaning when it can vehicle such values as empathy, selflessness and generativity. Thus, construction of meaning could be a result of consistency between the worker's values and behavior. Many adhere to the idea that the meaning of work can be reviewed from the perspective of consistency (Yalom, 1980; Morin, 2001, 2008). More than ever, this position needs a clever link between various spheres of life, and needs conciliations and regulations between some values (Lourel & St-Onge, 2012). Just as life, work is not a new concern (Bernaud, 2016), and this concept did not appear spontaneously with all its characteristics from its prehistoric origins (Méda &Vandramin, 2013). The various meanings it has nowadays have added up to one another over time. However, the key point is that work is an energy expenditure aimed at producing anything useful through a set of activities (Firth, 1948; Fryer & Payne, 1984; Shepherdson, 1984). Basically, work is all about facing difficulties that influence the development of resilient ingenuity (Dejours, 1993). It carts both a pleasant and unpleasant tone, and takes it meaning namely from its socioeconomic usefulness. People work for self-love and for the love of their families. Even the aim of the pleasure obtained from a "good" job is firstly to expand the narcissist nature of its author, and therefore strengthen their self-esteem. It is notably because of self-love that one assesses the perfection of a work's results, which is why we search for consistency between the self and what we do. By looking further into good job, one can enjoy one's own qualities and appreciate their inherent talent. The process is the same when we admire other people's work. By doing that, we compare with them and acknowledge them as alter ego, having equal qualities, defeating the same difficulties and clearing the same obstacles. In that respect, three theoretical approaches were used to set the roles of meaning in workers' life: a) Research of Frankl (1969), then of Hackman & Oldham (1976), which focused on the contribution of work to the construction of the meaning of life, have revealed that finding the meaning of work drives an individual to fulfil their destiny; b) at the same time, Rosso et al. (2010), Steger et al. (2012) and Proulx et al. (2013) have shown that meaning focuses workers' attention and drives their behaviours and actions to the fulfilment of their working goals; c) finally, Rosso et al. (2010) and Steger et al. (2012) then Gomez-Gonzalez et al.'s (2013) approach based on the understanding of work determined that understanding work can assign a meaning to it and provide an integration of one's identity through the construction of a social identity and the backup of personal dignity. However, meaning is an individual experience, as well as the feeling of the absence of meaning, which can be described as a state of emptiness in one's existence, characterised by boredom, apathy and vacuity which become more prevalent in all fields of life (Ruffin, 1984; Frankl, 1969; Yalom, 1980). It is often determined by the lack of purpose (Frankl, 1969), the feeling of dependency and inauthenticity, and the feeling of powerlessness (May et al., 2004). The central assumption of these approaches is that workers who experience meaning in their work find resources for their personal development, motivation and well-being at work (Spreitzer et al., 1997). However, a meaningless work might lead to alienation and disengagement. Hypothesis (H_3): we support that experience of meaning through social usefulness can play an intermediate role between work constraints (perceived workload, hierarchical support) and workplace wellness.

1.5 Research Conceptual Framework

Baron and Kenny (1986) have explained the roles of the variables involved in a triangular relation where one variable (the mediating variable) plays an intermediary role between two other variables (independent variable and dependent variable) that are both involved in an explanatory model. Their mediation model's shape can be seen in the following diagram:
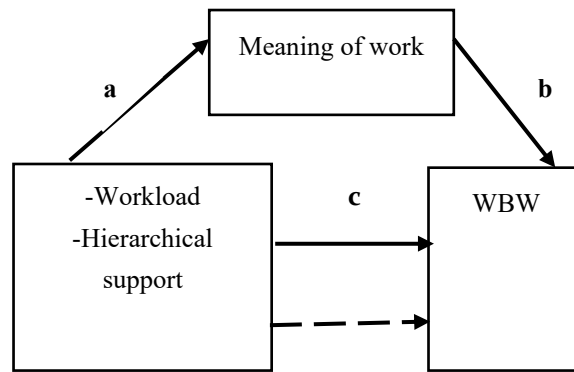
Figure 1. diagram of research conceptual framework. Note. well-being at Work (WBW)

The model above has three variables. We assume that the interaction between two of them, rather than its underlying components, results in the third variable. This design consists in three linear regression equations, which allow us to materialize the direct influence of the independent variable (X) on the mediator (M) and the dependant variable (Y), but also the residual effect of both the independent variable (X) and the mediating variable (M) on the dependant variable (Y) when (M) and (X) are simultaneously incorporated in the same least squares linear regression calculation.

$$Y = \beta_{1.0} + cX + e_1 \ (E_1)$$
$$M = \beta_{2.0} + aX + e_2 \ (E_2)$$
$$Y = \beta_{3.0} + c'X + bM + e_3 \ (E_3)$$

If $E_1; E_2; E_3$ represent the three least squares linear equations, $\beta_{1.0}; \beta_{2.0}; \beta_{3.0}$ refer to the intercept of each of the three; with c as X total effect on; a as X total effect on M; c' as X residual effect on Y and b as M residual effect on Y.

Yzerbyt et al. (2018) revealed that: when the three conditions are met, the mediation is effective if, and only if the independent variable's X (total effect (c) on the dependent variable Y (E_1) is greater in absolute value than the independent variable X residual effect (c') on the dependant variable Y (E_3). In other words, in case the three equations were correctly evaluated, the mediation model comprises an underlying equality which can be formulated trough the following fundamental equation: $c = c' + a \times b$. What appears through it is that the difference between X on Y direct effect (c) and residual effect (c') is equal to the product between X on M direct effect (a) and the residual effect of M on Y.

In this approach, Baron and Kenny (1986) were more interested in the interaction effect between the independent variable and the mediating variable, rather than the direct effects of underlying components. When the effects of the independent variable and the mediator on the dependent variable are estimated jointly (E_3), there is a high risk of multicollinearity inflation. Therefore, the independent variable might have a lower coefficient when it is the only one that predicts the dependant variable (c), and a higher coefficient when it acts simultaneously with the mediator (c') in one equation. But the high coefficient will not be significant, while the low one will be.

If the value of c' is reduced to zero, there is a strong evidence that it is a single dominant variable. But, if the same residual effect of X on Y is non-zero, then, many mediating factors are acting here. In order to make sure that the mediating effect is meaningful, it is recommended to use the divisive approach suggested by Yzerbyt et al. (2018). This approach shows that the two coefficients that constitute the product between X on M direct effect (a) and the residual effect of M on Y (b) are simultaneously meaningful.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and Procedure

Table 1. Sample Description

	Category	Headcount	Frequency
Gender	Women	313	62.43%
	Men	268	37.57%
Age	[21 – 30]	155	30.39%
	[31 – 40]	179	43.65%
	[41 – 50]	138	20.99%
	[51 – 60]	19	4.97%
Type of school	Primary	285	46.96%
	Secondary	296	53.04 %
Length of service	Lessthan 5 years	137	20.44%
	[5 – 10]	183	45.85%
	[11 – 20]	140	22.10%
	[21 – 30]	112	6.63%

Although the crisis of meaning tends to spread to all sectors of activity (Yalom, 1980), the teachers seem to be more exposed to the loss of meaning because of the general decline in the skill level and the development of incivility. We therefore logically chose to target this population to conduct this study. Several school heads in the center region (Cameroon) provided us with computerized lists of teachers. We invited all 1000 teachers to participate in the survey. To achieve this, we were present during sectoral meetings organized by the school heads. We insisted on the fact that the supervision authorities accepted the implementation of the research with the teachers, after validating the ethical guarantee provided by the ethics committee of the Yaoundé 1 University. But they are not implicated in the research however. It was also an opportunity to answer questions and dispel fears. Each time, the research questionnaires were distributed to the volunteers in closed envelopes with a stamped envelope addressed to the researchers. Several reminders were sometimes necessary to obtain the collaboration of some respondents. The completed questionnaires were hand-delivered to the researchers.

Our sample is made up of five hundred and eighty-one (581) volunteer's teachers from Yaounde (Cameroon)people who have agreed to submit their completed questionnaire. In order to make a better description of the sample's nature, sociodemographic data of the 581 participants are presented in Table 1. It appears that the sample is mainly made up of women, i.e. 313 women (62.43%) and 268 men (37.57%). The average age of people interviewed is 35 years, with an important dispersion (standard deviation = 7,9). This is a characteristic of a population dominated by youths below 40 years, with the youngest individual aged 21, and the oldest 60. This age repartition illustrates the country's population, and perhaps the whole African continent, which is made up of an important group of young people with a low life expectancy. They represent major challenges in terms of employability, health, nutrition, etc. (Nyock Ilouga, 2018). Not all interviewed teachers intervene at the same level of education. 285 participants (46.96%) teach in primary school and 296 participants (53.04%) teach in secondary school. Among the 581 teachers who accepted to take part in this study, 287 (48.07%) work in the public sector, while 294 (51.93%) work in the private sector. As for the length of employment, it ranges between two (2) years and thirty (30) years (*M*= 8.93, σ = 6.43). The study took place during the month of May 2019. Participants were asked to fill a questionnaire with a pencil. To that end, we met all interviewed teachers in their different schools.

2.2 Material

The workload. Measurement scale for the amount of work was built based on the works of Ntsame-Sima (2012). It is made up of 26 items (e.g. *I am in charge of too many students, which is emotionally heavy for me*) recorded on a Likert scale in 3 points ("1. Strongly disagree"; "2. Moderately agree"; "3. Strongly agree''). The internal consistency of the scale is therefore α = .84.

Hierarchical support. A ten items edited version of the FOCUS research group's tool (Nyock Ilouga, 2007) was used to assess the level of hierarchical (e.g. *Employees receive assistance from the management in order to*

progress). Items were recorded on a Likert scale in 3 points ("1. Strongly disagree"; "2. Moderately agree"; "3. Strongly agree"), with an internal consistency of α = .90.

The meaning of work. Measurement of the meaning of work originates from a questionnaire which assesses the psychological enablement through four sub-dimensions: the meaning of work, perceived autonomy, perceived influence, and a sense of competence. Actually, the measurement of the meaning of work is a subscale of the francophone version of the psychological enablement questionnaire designed by Gobert (2000) and approved by Boudrias et al. (2010). It has been used to collect participants' opinion about their work. Items for the measurement of the meaning of work were recorded on a Likert scale in 3 points ("1. Strongly disagree"; "2. Moderately agree"; "3. Strongly agree"), with a very satisfactory internal consistency (α = .89).

Workplace wellness. Gilbert et al.'s (2011) measurement scale for workplace wellness (WpW) was used in the frame of this study. In fact, it is a version of Massé et al.'s scale for measuring manifestations of psychological well-being (1998), adapted to the world of work and empirically approved by Gilbert et al. (2011). It is made up of 25 items recorded in 3 points ("1. Strongly disagree"; "2. Moderately agree"; "3. Strongly agree") on a scale of Likert that was used in the frame of the present study (e.g. *I feel confident*). The internal consistency of this scale was highly satisfactory (α = .90).

2.3 Data Analysis

Internal consistency checks were conducted (Cronbach's alpha) to assess the internal consistency of items used in measurement scales. Descriptive analysis (averages and standard deviations) have also been applied to summarize the information collected about each variable. In order to check our various hypothesis, we favored the linear least squares technique to solve linear regression equations (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

3. Result

3.1 Correlations Analysis

Correlations analyses were carried out to examine the links between the variables under study.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix, Means, Standard Deviations (Cronbach's alpha)

Variables	1	2	3	4	Average	Standard Deviation
1. Workload	(.84)				1.9	.34
2. Support	-.29**	(.90)			2.23	.59
3. Direction	-.27**	.56***	(.89)		2.67	.53
4. WBW	-.25**	.54***	.66***	(.90)	2.47	.34

Note. *** p <.001; ** p <.01. Cronbach's alphas (α) are given on the dialogual in brackets. Support= hierarchical support; WBW= psychological well-being at work.

The BET has positive and very high links with hierarchical support (r = .54, p < .001) and work direction (r = .66, p < .001). This means that the support provided to workers contributes not only to their well-being, but also to the discovery of the meaning of work. Workload is negatively related to BET (r = -.25, p < .01) and sense of work (r = -.27, p < .01). This suggests that when workload appears high to the worker, it inhibits well-being and masks the sense of work.

3.2 Regression Analysis

Simple and multiple regression analyses were carried out to test whether the direction of work sense acted as a mediator variable between workload, hierarchical support and psychological well-being at work. Baron and Kenny' (1986) guidelines were followed to check whether the basic postulates of a mediating effect ere respected.

First, these authors mention that, in order to conclude mediation, the independent variable must be linked to the mediating variable. This first condition has been fulfilled, since the regression equation (E_2) shows that:

- The workload contributes significantly to the explanation of the variance of the meaning of work scores; adjusted R^2 = .11; $F_{(1, 579)}$ = 25.28, p< .001; a_1(Note 1) = -.54, t = -5.02, p< .001.

- Hierachical support contributes significantly to the explanation of the variance of the meaning of work scores; adjusted R^2 = .31; $F_{(1, 579)}$ = 84.12, p< .001; a_2 = .51, t = 9.17, p< .001.

Second, it is important the independent variables are significantly related to the dependent variable. This third condition has been met as the regression equation (E_1) reveals that:

- The workload contributes significantly to the explanation of the well-being score variance at work, adjusted $R^2 = .10$; $F_{(1, 579)} = 22.80$, $p < .001$; c_1(Note 2) $= -.33$, $t = -4.77$, $p < .001$. This result validates our first hypothesis (H_1). Nevertheless, the average score of well being at work is not as low as we considered in this hypothesis.

- Hierarchical support contributes significantly to the explanation of the well-being score variance. Adjusted $R^2 = .28$; $F_{(1, 579)} = 72.47$, $p < .001$; $c_2 = .30$, $t = 8.51$, $p < .001$. This result supports our second hypothesis (H_2).

- Third, the mediator variable must be related to the dependent variable. This third condition has been met as the regression equation reveals that:

- The workload contributes significantly to the explanation of the well-being score variance at work, adjusted $R^2 = .43$; $F_{(1, 579)} = 138.94$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .42$, $t = 11.78$, $p < .001$.
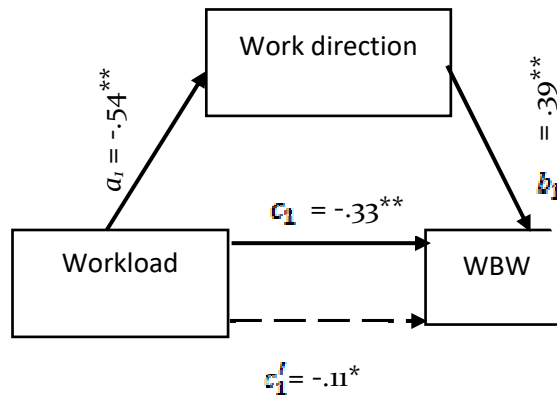

Figure 2. A Mediation's example of work direction in the relationship between workload and well-being at Work (WBW). Note. **=p < 0,001

Finally, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), perfect mediation is observed if the independent variable no longer has an effect on the variable when the mediating variable is controlled, then a partial mediating effect can be concluded. Conversely, if the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable decreases but remains significant when the mediating variable is controlled, then a partial mediating effect can be concluded. This last condition has been met. Simultaneously including the independent variable (workload) and the mediator (work direction) in the same regression equation, the regression coefficients which estimate the workload ($c_1^t = -.11$; $p < .05$) and hierarchical support ($c_2^t = .13$; $p < .001$) residual effects remain significant as predictors of the psychological well-being at work.
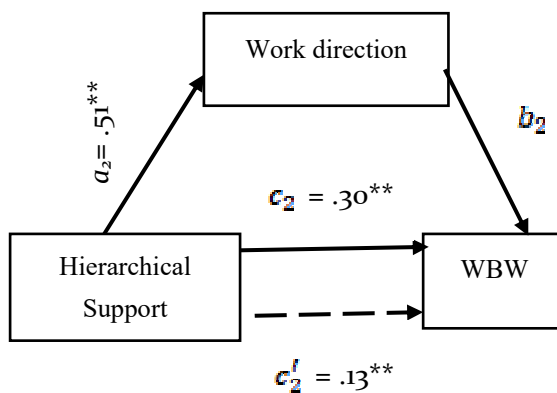

Figure 3. A Mediation's example work direction in the relationship between hierarchical support and well-being at Work. Note. **=p < 0,001

3.3 Verification of the Fundamental Equation of Mediation

In our study, we examined the operational validity of the underlying equality of the mediation model suggested by Yzerbyt et al. (2018). It appears that:

- a) When considering workload as an independent variable, meaning of work as a mediating variable and well-being at work as a dependent variable, we obtain the following result:

- b) $[c_1 = c_1' + a_1 \times b_1] \rightarrow [(-.11) + ((-.54) \times .39) = -.3206 \cong -.33]$.

- c) When hierarchical support is considered as an independent variable, meaning of work as a mediating variable and well-being at work as a dependent variable, the following result is obtained:

- d) $[c_2 = c_2' + a_2 \times b_2] \rightarrow [.13 + (.51 \times .33) = .2983 \cong .30]$.

Based on the results of this estimation of the basic mediation equation, we can conclude that work meaning is an excellent mediator of the effects of organizational constraints (perceived workload and perceived hierarchical support) on well-being at work. This result brings total support to our third hypothesis (*H₃*).

4. Discussion

We initiated this research to test one of the dominant hypotheses in the current positive psychology literature that the meaning of work mediated the impact of work constraints on psychological well-being in the workplace (Steger et al., 2012). From the series of three regression equations performed using the linear least squares method, it was observed that the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986) are fulfilled. All regression coefficients were found to be significant for all three equations (E_1, E_2, E_3). These results thus support the hypothesis introduced by Yzerbyt et al. (2018) of the joint significance of the residual effects c' and b of equation (E_3). In fact, in accordance with the postulate of the factor model, the indirect effect is attested if and only if the two regression coefficients which form the product of the indirect effects are simultaneously significant. However, the mediation effect is then effective when the values of the regression coefficients which attest to the presence of the residual effects remain lower in absolute value than those associated with the direct effects in equations E_1, and E_2. In other words, the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable (psychological well-being at work) are smaller when we have introduced the mediating variable (direction of work) into the equation.

The results in Figure 2 show that the workload perceived by the teachers surveyed has the effect of degrading their BET; this is justified by the negative value of the regression coefficient ($c_1 = -.33$; p<.001). On the other hand, the fact that a worker finds meaning in his or her work has the effect of increasing well-being ($\beta = .42$; p<.001). In contrast, Figure 3 shows that hierarchical support improves the psychological well-being of employees ($c_2 = .30$; p<.001). Also, the fact that a worker knows that he or she is supported by his or her hierarchy will contribute to the construction of the meaning of work.

In general, this study tends to confirm the central role of work meaning in the study of psychological well-being at work (Morin, 2008). The fact that workers perceive that their work makes sense would be significantly related to the fact that they feel good and experience fewer symptoms of psychological distress. Thus, lightening the workload and constant evidence of positive feedback and recognition from the line manager could promote the construction of a sense of meaning in work and, subsequently, better well-being at work. Indeed, managers would benefit from setting up management methods that encourage employees to build work meaning (Bernaud et al., 2015) by reducing the workload and giving them recognition by valuing the work they do.

4.1 Limitations of the Study

However, this study has certain limitations. A first limitation of this study concerns the selection process of participants. The sample for this research is quite small in terms of scope since it comes from a single educational background. This limitation means that the conclusions drawn from this study must be generalized with caution to populations from other settings or work contexts. The use of measuring instruments with certain characteristics could also be seen as a limitation. Indeed, all of the measurement scales used in this study were assessed on a three-point Lickert scale, which contrasts with the original versions of these scales, which were almost all assessed on a five-point scale. The use of these instruments would therefore limit the scope of the results. Second, the data for this research was collected through a single source of information, self-reported questionnaires. As a result, these questionnaires measured employees' perceptions of the various variables. Also, the social desirability effect (Leplège, 2001) and the participant response biases associated with this evaluation method may have affected the results. Finally, the research design itself used for this study is restrictive. In fact, taking a single measurement time does not make it possible to predict all of the effects of the variables studied

over a longer period of time. Indeed, as the researchers of MOW (1987) put forward, it seems that the direction of work is a concept that evolves over time for the same individual. A longitudinal research design would have made it possible to better understand the variation in workers' perception of the meaning of work over time. This type of estimate would also make it possible to observe a possible evolution over time of the other variables studied, i.e. perceived workload, hierarchical support and psychological well-being at work.

In light of the limitations outlined above, suggestions for future research will now be presented.

4.2 Avenues for Future Research

In terms of future avenues of research, it would be interesting to replicate this research by studying these questions with diverse samples. It might be particularly relevant to include different job categories in order to draw various profiles of individuals. In addition, using a sample of participants from various backgrounds would make it possible to verify whether the results are comparable from one setting to another. With respect to instrumentation, the instrument used to measure the direction of work consisted of only three items. One would suspect that its small number of items did not allow for sufficient variability in the participants' responses to this variable. Thus, it would be relevant to use the instrument developed by Arnoux-Nicolas, Sovet, L'hotellier and Bernaud (2017) to measure the meaning of work. Since this instrument in addition to having a large number of items (17 items) has been empirically validated in the Cameroonian context by Nyock Ilouga et al. (2018).

5. Conclusion

The issue of the psychological well-being of employees at work is becoming increasingly important at the global socio-economic level. Since the meaning of work could play an important role for psychological well-being at work, it is important that the mediating effect of this variable be analyzed in relation to several factors that have an impact on the BET. In this study, only partial mediating effects were found between organizational drivers (respectively workload and hierarchical support) and psychological well-being at work. It will therefore be necessary to analyze the presence of multiple mediators (Grigoratus & Brunet, 2008) which will better explain the relationship between these two organizational drivers and psychological well-being at work. However, some limitations have been raised and avenues for further investigation have been proposed.

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Notes

Note 1. Since the independent variable includes two modalities (perceived workload and hierarchical support), we have decomposed the direct effect (a) of the IV on M into two sub-effects: a_1 for the effect of workload and a_2 for the effect of hierarchical support on the direction of work.

Note 2. Here, we have equally decomposed the effect (c) de l' IV on the DV into two sub-effects: c_1 for the workload effect on the well-being at work and c_2 for the hierarchical support on the well-being at work.

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